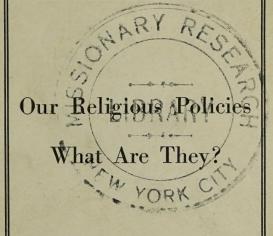
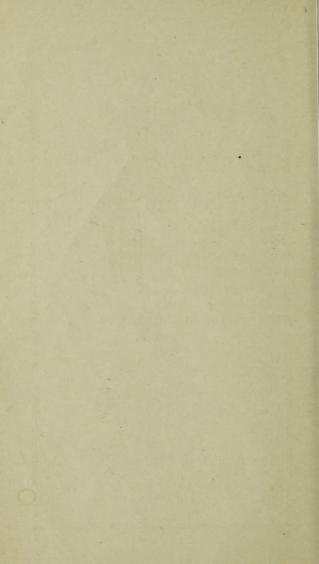
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## Our Religious Policies What Are They?

We have been praised in public addresses because we do not teach religion and we have been damned because we do. We have lost a number of Moslem students because their parents were apprehensive about the strong Christian character of our institution and for a month we were found worthy of front page attack in a fire eating Cairo newspaper because we were propagandists of Christianity.

"You don't proselytize, do you?" is the blunt question of many a tourist who visits the American University at Cairo. "I don't suppose you dare attempt anything of religious instruction?" is the form of the inquiry which others put to us who have sensed the inflammable character of religious disputes in the Moslem world. Where do we stand? What is our religious policy?

First of all, may I observe that the discussion of the subject calls for much definition of terms. What is "teaching religion"? What do we mean by "Christianity" anyhow? Judging by those who visit us, there are more than 57 varieties. Some of these we would neither endorse nor consider worth imparting to others. Then that horrid word

"proselytize," what does it mean? Personally I have discarded it for any good significance. The use of it in the King James version (Matthew XXIII, 15) attaches to it the meaning of gaining adherents by ignoble methods of persuasion and without sincere conviction on their part. That sort of business may do for politics but it ought to have no place in religion. This suggests the first feature of our policy.

- 1. In our religious policy, we put the emphasis on content and not on label. we can get the Moslem lad to accept the content of Christianity, Christ's revelation of God, Christ's invitation to fellowship with God, Christ's way of living, Christ's ideals of uprightness and personal morality, Christ's love of others and sacrificial service. -we are glad. If the content of Christianity is in his life, the label will take care of itself. Some day, some one will come along and give him a name that will distinguish his brand of life from the ordinary brand of a Moslem world. Christians were not any less Christians before they were called Christians at Antioch. It is a question whether they were any more so afterward. At any rate we are supremely interested in content, not in labels, though we believe in right labels too.
- 2. Further, in our religious approach, we try to emphasize open mindedness and fairness. The very word University commits us to that and we try to live up to it.

Is there good in Islam (and there is), we try to recognize it. Is it conceivable that the loving Heavenly Father Whom Jesus revealed to us would leave whole blocks of humanity across whole centuries of time without a scintilla of spiritual light and comfort? Our jealousy for His goodness forbids us to believe that. And if there are values there, it is our business to find them and appraise them. But not to overappraise them either. Likewise, are there imperfections in Christendom, in its social and economic and international order; we do not hesitate to criticize. We must cultivate a spirit of fairness and establish a reputation for open mindedness. This is Christian. It is also the price of any influence with Moslem youth.

3. Still more important is our emphasis on reality. A formal Christianity, centuries old, has interpenetrated Islam and has conveyed seemingly ineradicable misconceptions in the Moslem mind as to the moral and spiritual content of Christianty. Contact with the West has not helped matters. Dr. John R. Mott once remarked that the worst conditions will be found to prevail where two civilizations meet. That is where our lot is cast. Almost every religious term and adjective bears a false meaning: Christian, holy, church, prayer, Bible, God, Christ, Holy Spirit, sinless, sinful, love, woman, philanthropy, service,—these all bear meanings that we would not countenance. Our supreme problem is religious and moral reality. And this leads to another feature of our religious policy.

- 4. Because of unreality, there is no effective way of "getting our meaning across" apart from action. Christian honesty becomes real when you play a game of basketball with it, very real when a team loses because of it. Christian standards of life became very real when the basket-ball team some years ago sat in judgment over members who drank after playing a game in another city, and voted punishment even more severe than the faculty ultimately felt was required. A boy from Mecca said to one of the staff after a health service trip to the villages, "Sir, you often spoke in Assembly about the joy of serving others, but I never knew what you meant until today." Religion in action interprets what we mean. Mere statement is not enough. One has to sit up nights to discover ways of putting Christian ideas and ideals into action. But it has to be done to get the message across.
- 5. Another plank in our religious policy is to maintain a *spirit of voluntariness* about religion. Religious browbeating has been too much the prevailing attitude in the religious world of the Near East. Perhaps the "holy" wars of Islam and the so-called "Christian" (?) crusades gave to the Near East this set of mind. At any rate it prevails and the result is that everywhere a

defensive, self-protective attitude is assumed the moment that religion is referred to. Consequently, religion cannot get a fair hearing until this attitude is removed.

So we say to the student, "We have come from America to give you a number of things which we have found useful. Some of these values lie in the sphere of chemistry and physics; but some of them are in the sphere of moral and religious ideals. Come in and let us tell you about them. Of course, if you do not find them useful, you do not need to appropriate them. Take them or leave them. But we have found them very useful in individual, social and national life and we want to tell you about them."

Thus, our daily chapel or Assembly was originally decided upon by a vote of the students of our first enrolment, fifty per cent Moslem, who were asked whether they didn't believe such a daily gathering both reasonable and desirable. They voted "Yes".

But some one protests that our Assembly and classes of moral and religious study—two periods a week—are compulsory. They are. So is our chemistry and physics and botany and physical culture. To this last especially some boys make objection, but we require attendance just the same. So is it with our religious subjects. But the spirit of the class room is not religious compulsion. It is an atmosphere of very free and unrestrained discussion and the assertion of the

most conflicting positions. When the principle of self determination is accepted for all classes and subjects, then attendance on religious instruction will also be made voluntary. Until then, it would be to play needlessly into the hands of the weather, or the counter influences of a beguiling campus, or the leadership of an occasional fanatical spirit, to make such attendance optional. The chief point, however, is the spirit of the class room. There, no spirit of religious compulsion is allowed.

6. Another point about our religious policy is that we have found the study of Jesus, His life and His teachings, the most acceptable and the most dynamic material for all moral and religious education in a Moslem world. You would have laid that down for us beforehand, doubtless, as our aim and duty. But I didn't say we had it as an obligation, though I think we would recognize that. But I said we have found Him the best. He isn't nearly so controversial as your theological statements; He is not controversial at all in that sense. Nor is He as vulnerable to Moslem attacks as Christendom is: He is not vulnerable at all. Also He is new, very new. To tell the truth Islam, for the most part, hasn't heard of Him. They had His name, 'Isu, but He was just one of innumerable prophets, and His character and teachings have been under an eclipse of ignorance. Probably most of our staff would set forth their

religious aim as was set forth in the answer which the Director of our Religious Work gave a year ago, "As far as I am personally concerned I am trying to get students to face Jesus sincerely and to work out the implications of such a facing in their own lives." Men may differ in what they read into such a statement, some reading more, some less. It gives you, however, the central note of our instruction, the central message of our religious program.

7. If Jesus Christ is the center of our religious program, transformation of character is our immediate goal. Recently our entire staff spent two afternoons discussing our religious policy and program. The two points on which, through experience and conviction, all seemed agreed, were the foregoing point about Jesus as our supreme dynamic and the present one about transformation of character as our immediate objective. Along this line we can point to results. The student who leaves us may still call himself a Moslem, but he is a very different type of man from the youth who came to us. His conception of God is different, his standards of personal morality, his appreciation of Jesus, his attitude toward women, his sense of honor and honesty, his open mindedness, his standards of service,-these all would make him unrecognizable if some method of ethical and spiritual photography were possible, before and after

Last year one of our students boarded a street car at its terminal. It was empty. As he slipped into a seat he found a bag. It contained jewels. The ordinary standard of morality would have allowed him to appropriate it. He took it over to the Police Station and turned it in. Its value was appraised at \$5,000. The owner, frantic over his loss, finally recovered his property. The incident was so unique, so extradorinary, that all the papers of the city commented on it. One gave the student's picture. Two wrote editorials inquiring whether this was the sort of morality that the American University at Cairo stood for. Our institution had that proud and embarrassed feeling that we imagine the American doughboy had when Foch pinned a decoration on his breast and kissed him on both cheeks.

8. Our religious policy also recognizes a Christian life as an endless growth and a joyful adventure.

Is not Christianity, too frequently, looked upon as a fixed and standardized thing, which you could convey to others like rations to a soldier, all packed up and sealed, complete? So mission schools are expected to report: "Ahmed was converted last month and this month he was baptized and joined the Church." Exit Ahmed! Finished!

But that is not our experience, at least not usually, and certainly not as regards the "exit" and the "finished." Our Ahmed is just like your boy John. He came to us 95 per cent boy, perhaps 5 per cent Moslem. Last year he faced up to the standards of Jesus in respect to personal purity and something gripped him. He told his faculty advisor that he wanted to "cut out" certain practices in his life but didn't know how. This led to a long talk about God's readiness to help and how we get His help. So Ahmed said he'd make a stab at it. He made a start, fell down a number of times, was picked up and is still on the way.

This year, Ahmed is raising a lot of questions as to what Jesus means about life. In the class on social ethics, he is proving very controversial. He admits Moslem society is all wrong, but he doesn't see that the Christian social and economic order is in keeping with the teachings of Jesus either. He agrees that in either case it is our business to right the wrong and he is very active in our work in the villages.

Do you get the point? The Christian life is a seed. It grows gradually, "First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear." And it grows with endless variation. We recognize in our religious policy that we can only set the young man on the Jesus-way. No man living can tell in what direction Christ will lead him, nor how far. But that's the glory of it. The process is endless. There is no "finish." His is the power of an endless life.

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Checks May be made out to the Treasurer and sent to the above address.